

Brownfields Showcase Community Summit  
National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals  
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC  
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## **Introduction**

Acknowledgements.

It's really a pleasure to be here with you today. Since I took command of the Corps I have made it a priority to meet with our stakeholders. It gives me a chance to get your perspective first hand, and it allows me to present the Corps to you. The work you do represents a vital contribution to the economic future of America's cities. The Corps has been a part of the success you have achieved so far. We would like to do everything we can to ensure your continued success in the future.

I personally recognize the importance that communities place on cleaning up and reusing brownfields. National strategies for brownfields affect many issues of central importance to your communities such as preservation of greenspace, public and environmental health, infrastructure renewal, and most importantly – the health of your local economies. One of the key points that I'd like to leave with you today is that the Corps is a committed federal partner in the effort to make our communities more livable, environmentally healthy, and economically secure.

## **Corps Environmental Operating Principles**

You may be aware that I announced a new environmental initiative for the Corps two months ago. There is a tremendous range of environmental activities that the Corps is involved in. They cross all of our civil works, military programs, and research and development operations. Several of you know this first hand because of the projects we're working on in your communities.

I've set a mark on the wall and I've asked my staff to come back to me with a coordinated proposal for a set of environmental operating principles. This was our starting point:

**Environmental Sustainability** - All Corps work will be based upon the need for people and nature to co-exist in a healthy, supportive, diverse, and sustainable condition.

**Recognize interdependence of activities** - We will recognize interdependence with nature. We will consider the possibility of second and third order effects of our projects.

**Be responsible for cumulative impacts** - The Corps will accept responsibility for the consequences of planning, design, and construction decisions upon the continued viability of natural systems and human life.

**Be committed to long-term public safety** - The Corps will create only safe, engineered objects of long-term value.

**Support a systems approach** - In all aspects of our design and construction, the Corps will evaluate and optimize the life cycle of products and processes so that, as much as possible, we approach the state of natural systems, in which there is no waste.

**Understand and utilize the dynamic nature of the environment** - Our projects will rely to the fullest extent possible on renewable energy sources and recyclable products.

And finally...**Seek continuous improvements** - As public servants, we will seek constant improvements by sharing, promoting, collaborating, and integrating knowledge.

My bottom line - I want everyone in the Corps “on the same sheet of music,” and to provide a philosophical underpinning for our environmental activities. My intent is to develop doctrine that will encompass all USACE environmental operations. We want to improve the services that we deliver to your constituents, and the way that we deliver them. However, it’s just as important for our stakeholders and the public to know what we stand for when it comes to environmental protection and restoration.

### Local Impacts

Now if I were you I might be wondering, “sounds great but what difference is it going to make in my community?” Let’s talk about how the Corps can fit into infrastructure and brownfields development at the local level and then I’ll give you a couple of examples.

Our nation faces compelling water resources and environmental challenges that will affect our prosperity and quality of life. I frequently refer to the national infrastructure report card that is produced by the American Society of Civil Engineers. It helps to provide perspective on where our nation may be headed if we don’t pay attention to our infrastructure challenges. The 2001 report card gave waterways a D+, and hazardous waste management didn’t score any better. The overall national infrastructure score was also a D+. Now I don’t know about you, but the only time I was happy to get a D+ was in Organic Chemistry.

This is no surprise to you – you’re dealing with many of these challenges and working to develop solutions for them on a daily basis. Many urban communities are struggling to cope with issues such as degraded environments, less open space, deteriorating infrastructure and a reluctance on the part of developers to invest in rehabilitation of brownfields.

In many cases brownfields sites are adjacent to waterways, and that’s where the Corps can have an impact on the problem. We do not have any specific authorities to support Brownfields projects, but the Corps has several water resources development authorities. I’m not going to give you a detailed presentation on them but they cross a wide range of activities such as:

- modifying existing Corps projects to improve the quality of the environment (Section 216 of FCA '70);
- removal of contaminated sediments (Section 312 WRDA '90 and Section 205
- and aquatic ecosystem restoration projects to improve the quality of the environment (Section 206 WRDA '96).

Here's another take away point – look for ways to leverage water resources improvements as part of a local Brownfields redevelopment strategy. My district commanders will help you to do this. In fact, let me know if you have any problems and I'll have them doing pushups to emphasize the importance of this point.

There are several federal programs that support Brownfields and community redevelopment. In some cases, funding from other federal programs can be used as the local contribution for a Corps water resources development project. This is not always an easy proposition, and there are a number of conditions that usually have to be met. I mention it as an alternative for communities to leverage federal contributions they receive from diverse sources.

### Environmentally Sustainable Projects

So what kind of solutions do we want to promote? As we look to the future I believe that we must develop environmentally sustainable alternatives. One example is the Napa River Flood Protection Project. It combines non-structural approaches to flood protection, wetlands creation, new recreation trails and the cleanup of hazardous waste from a number of industrial properties. Restored terraces of tidal marsh will reestablish segments of the historical floodplain and provide a natural “sponge” that will help to absorb high river flows.

The plan for this project was the locally preferred alternative and it will provide multiple benefits. Corps staff worked with the city to come up with a solution that was technically feasible, and will deliver the economic benefits that are a prerequisite for any water resources project that we recommend.

### Continuous Improvement/Transparency

While the Corps represents the national interest, we must also be sensitive to the needs of local communities. To create lasting solutions for our nation's environmental challenges, the Corps needs to become more transparent and involve a broad range of stakeholders during the early phases of project planning. The Corps will focus on continuous improvement, and we will seek out the advice of others to accomplish this.

Synergy is a concept that I have brought to the Corps that is directly related to this

objective. We have adopted Stephen Covey's definition that describes synergy as "the fruit of thinking win-win and seeking first to understand ... It's not compromise ... It's the creation of third alternatives that are genuinely better than solutions individuals could ever come up with on their own." Synergy will be incorporated into everything that the Corps does and it may have its greatest value in our environmental missions.

Again, what does this mean to you – It means that my local commanders will be working hard to network with community leaders to find out what your priorities are, and how to best serve them.

### Conclusion

There are several other areas where the Corps has been a partner and a source of expertise in Brownfields redevelopment. Many of the cities represented here today have chosen to use EPA grants associated with Showcase Community status to engage Corps employees as full time coordinators in local Brownfields programs. The feedback I have been getting is that our people are doing a good job for you. We appreciate your confidence in allowing us to work with you like this.

Since I became the Corps Commander, I have traveled to the majority of our district and division offices throughout the country. I have met personally with many of our local stakeholders, visiting waterfront and industrial sites that have been blighted by many years of neglect. When I see these places I also see the hopes, dreams and aspirations of community leaders trying to do the right thing for their people. That's the kind of leadership I want to support. Wherever our authorities allow, we will do our best to support you with innovative solutions for the brownfields redevelopment challenges facing our cities. It's the right thing to do, and it's a privilege for the Corps to be a part of the solution.

If you have any questions now I'd be happy to try to answer them.....